Critical Race Theory and Black feminist insights into 'race' and gender equality

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ABSTRACT

This paper applies the concept 'blind spots' to describe partial approaches to 'race' and gender equality agendas in sport organisations in the United Kingdom, drawing on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Equality and Coach Development Leaders. Using the specific context of sport coaching, our qualitative approach is underpinned by Critical Race Theory and the work of Black feminism and intersectionality scholarship. Three key themes are identified: The marginality of 'race' in the equalities agenda; Patterns of (in)visibility; and Whitening Equality. We argue that there is an urgent need for 'race' conscious intersectional critiques of sport coaching. This is to examine the multiplicity and complexities of inclusion and exclusion for coaches and the different levels at which social divisions are constructed and interconnected. The paper provides a theoretical contribution to develop 'race' equality research and outlines implications for policy makers and practitioners to help challenge notions of meritocracy.

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Introduction

The drive for more inclusive and equitable working environments are fundamental objectives within government strategies and policies in the United Kingdom (UK). The contribution of sport to society and the inclusion of different social groups within it is central to this drive. Publicly funded sport organisations and national governing bodies (NGBs) are

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lawfully required to have an equality policy in which protected characteristics, including 'race' and gender, must be addressed (Equality Act 2010). These equality policies outline an organisational commitment to comply with the law in terms of promoting racial and gender equality (Ahmed 2007b). Despite legislation and institutional statements that promise equality and inclusion, racism and its interconnections with sexism remain well-attested in sport leadership and coaching (Hylton 2018). Whilst recognising the significance of other differences, this research focuses specifically on 'race', gender and their intersections, examining organisational approaches to 'race' *and* gender equality in sport coaching.

UK statistics on the profile of NGB sport boards and senior leadership teams report that only 26 out of 601 board positions (4%) have Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME)[i] members. Only 1 out of 68 sports organisations has a BAME Chief Executive Officer (Sporting Equals 2016). There is a stark under-representation of women in all coaching and leadership positions across British sport (Women in Sport 2015), and an acute absence of BAME women, also reflected across policy agendas and sport sociology scholarship (Ratna and Samie 2018, Rankin-Wright and Norman 2018). The dearth of representation across the coaching workforce is defined as a "significant" and "urgent issue" for UK sport (Sporting Equals 2011, 3).

The sport context, although often regarded as meritocratic and equal for all, illuminates contemporary racisms and their connection with gender and other oppressions (Carrington 2012). The institutional concerns around 'race' and racialised gendered issues in all organisations are reproduced in sport. In particular, we reflect here upon myopic approaches in sport equalities domains that lead to institutional 'blind spots' that highlight relevant and significant social processes for other social institutions (Mirza 1997, 2009). For instance, it has been argued that in the US, Title IX[ii], despite its intent and commitments to address gender inequality, has actually reconstructed societal racial inequalities for African American women and women of colour due to issues of racial marginalisation (Carter-Francique 2018). Sociological work on the race-gender-sport nexus is vital to better understand debates around intersectionality to inform 'race' and gender equality initiatives in all sectors of British society.

To situate the empirical research in this paper, the following sections provide an outline of Mirza's (1997, 2009) concept of 'blind spots' and an overview of the policy

context for 'race' and gender equality in UK sport coaching. We then outline the Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach that draws on Black feminism and intersectionality scholarship employed as the framework for this study. Following this, the qualitative methodology used to explore how sport organisations approach 'race' and gender equality in sport coaching is detailed. The findings are discussed under three interrelated themes: 1) The marginality of 'race' in the equalities agenda, 2) Patterns of (in)visibility, and 3) Whitening Equality. Recommendations for research on, and sport organisational approaches for, 'race' and gender are outlined in the conclusion. The paper focuses on applying theoretical ideas to contribute towards strengthening 'race' and gender equality and diversity agendas within sport organisations.

Equality legislation and sport coaching

The shift from single issue politics to an overarching Equalities and Human Rights Commission, and a new UK Equality Act (2010) (see Gedalof 2013 for a review of this process) gained some acceptance of the shared issues regarding discrimination, prejudice, and inequalities. Yet, this Act 2010 failed to persuade many that it would adequately maintain a coherent focus on specific single equality issues or effectively operate an intersectional approach (Gedalof 2013, Solanke 2011). Solanke (2011: 336) has argued that although the previous nine statutes have been brought together in one document, "a system of single-dimension 'silos'" remains. This, Solanke (2011, 340) contends, has created a structural 'blind spot' that fails to account for synergetic intersections: "the cooperative effects … produced by two or more elements".

In an attempt to translate this equality legislation into practice in sport organisations to support more equitable ways of working, *The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport* was launched (2004), and updated in 2012, by UK Sport and the four UK Sport Councils[iii] (Sport England 2012). To achieve measurable targets linked to the achievement of four levels (see Shaw 2007 for a critique of this audit-based approach to equality), a number of sport organisations and NGBs employed Equality Leads, whose roles involved developing, promoting and implementing equality policies and strategies within their respective organisation. In addition, *The UK Coaching Framework*, published in 2012 by sports coach UK[iv], stated that a more diverse, inclusive and equitable coaching workforce were among its

central strategic objectives (sports coach UK 2012). This remit was continued in *The Coaching Plan for England 2017-2021*, in which a key aspiration is to increase the diversity of the coaching workforce to ensure that participants are coached by those "who are immediately empathetic to their needs and reflective of their social environment" (Sport England 2016, 18).

Notwithstanding these legislative influences, a racial and gender imbalance remains at the highest and most powerful levels of sport coaching (Hylton 2018, Rankin-Wright, Hylton and Norman 2017, Sporting Equals 2011). Critical race theory scholars have been vociferous in highlighting the anomalies and tensions within sport organisations and governance that have reinforced racial and gender hierarchies, and the liberal incrementalism that stymies social progress (Burdsey 2004b; Fletcher and Hylton 2017; Hylton and Lawrence 2016). CRT's focus on social justice can help sport organisations develop better antiracist policies (Hylton 2010; Carrington 2013). CRT's explication in sport and leisure contexts has enabled many critiques of stakeholders that embrace 'race' averse tactics or 'race' neutral ideologies, by explaining how the significance of 'race' and embeddedness of racism, microaggressions and colour blindness operate to maintain racial hierarchies while minimising meaningful change (cf. Bradbury, Sterkenburg and Mignon 2014; Burdsey 2004b; Hylton 2010, 2018).

Further, critical sociological scholarship that examines intersecting gendered and racialised experiences that facilitate, as well as constrain, coaches' progression in sport drawing on critical race scholarship is worthy of recognition (see for instance, Birrell 1989, Bruening 2005, Borland and Bruening 2010, Carter-Francique and Olushola 2016, Rankin-Wright and Norman 2018, Rankin-Wright, Hylton, and Norman 2017). With some exceptions, research concerned with the social complexities of sport organisations that have focused almost exclusively on 'race' and race equality have tended to highlight the *outcomes* of recruitment, development, and governance processes. Research on gender equality in sport coaching, although focusing greater attention on the *institutional processes,* has largely failed to acknowledge and critically analyse the whiteness of this institutional field and the intersecting and mutually constitutive nature of identities, difference and power that privilege, as well as disadvantage (Carter-Francique and Olushola 2016, Rankin-Wright and Norman 2018). We argue that this presents 'blind spots' in itself in relation to academic discourses focused on equality in sport.

Theorising gender and 'race'

To understand how 'race' and gender are approached within the equality sport coaching context, we approach this issue by applying a CRT perspective and draw on Black feminism and intersectionality scholarship. Studies have established CRT as a powerful tool for understanding and addressing issues of 'race', racial (in)equalities and whiteness in UK sport policy and practice (for example Burdsey 2011a, Hylton 2018). CRT is an interdisciplinary approach emerging from social activism that places 'race' at the centre of critical analyses (Hylton 2018). Whilst acknowledging that oppressions cannot be neatly separated or categorised (Bell 1992), CRT premises the significance of 'race' as an organising structure (Stefancic and Delgado 2013) and the endemic, insidious, and enduring everyday practice of racism (Bell 1992) in society. Adopting a historical perspective that links current inequalities to past racial oppression, CRT facilitates broad pragmatic intellectual tools that fundamentally challenge those discriminatory racialised power processes, which marginalise individuals and groups, whilst advantaging others (Crenshaw et al. 1995, Hylton 2012, 2018).

This paper applies the concept of 'blind spots', as described by Mirza (1997, 2009) in higher education, and Solanke (2011) in law, to examine approaches to equality policy implementation in UK sport coaching. Mirza (1997, 4) revealed how the concept of ideological blind spots applied in the construction of issues related to 'race', gender and class could exclude some while using the discourse of inclusion. She stated that,

> The invisibility of black[v] women speaks of the separate narrative constructions of race, gender and class: in a racial discourse, where the subject is male; in a gendered discourse where the subject is white; and a class discourse where race has no place.

This seminal quote retains its significance. Mirza's (2009) work on education policies and practice, and the marginalisation and exclusion of specific groups in the UK developed in her book 'Race, gender and educational desire: why Black women succeed and fail' over a decade later, continues to reiterate the critical attention needed around issues of 'race', gender and difference, across contexts. Jean and Feagin (1998) describe this phenomenon as a double-jeopardy, illustrating how black women not only have to experience the pressures of

everyday racism and sexism but combinations of them both. This explanation emphasises that black women experience racism and racialised myths and stereotypes, including being described as aggressive, matriarchs or hyper-sexualised, differently to black men while white women do not experience this phenomenon. This double-jeopardy can be missed when practitioners apply what has been described as a single-axis framework (Crenshaw 1989). Though diversity and difference are important elements of equalities discourses, there are moments when these differences operate at varying intersections and in varying contexts.

Applying the idea of 'blind spots' to a UK sport context, this paper critically reflects on elements of sport organisational practices, processes and ideologies, related to sport coaching, that perpetuate racialised and gendered inequalities and disparities within the profession. These 'blind spots' refer to issues that are 'not seen', or that are ignored, by Equality and Coach Education managers. In doing so, we focus on the multiplicity and complexities of approaches to gender and 'race' equality in sport coaching, aligned with the intersectional approach gestured in the streamlining of protected characteristics in the UK Equality Act (2010). Some of the unifying ideas of CRT, enlightened by the work of black feminists, which were centred to illuminate the blind spots in this paper included: colour-blindness, intersections of 'race' and gender with multiple oppressions, and whiteness. These are now discussed.

Colour-blindness

Colour-blind ideologies that reflect positions of privilege whilst ignoring racialised realities, processes and disparities, are argued to maintain the interests of dominant groups in society. We challenge endorsements of colour-blindness in sport because they pertain to liberal ideals of universal equality regardless of social location and histories (Rodriquez 2006). By denying the significance of 'race' from social relations in which inequalities and racial discourses are embedded, colour-blindness works as an ideology to reify racialised inequalities by obscuring the institutional arrangements that reproduce them (Rodriquez 2006). Burdsey (2011b) highlights the interconnectedness of these themes within the unequal patterns of player recruitment and employment in men's professional football in England. Burdsey found that British Asian football players were not only perceived by talent scouts to lack the physical and cultural traits required for professional football, they were also 'blamed' for their exclusion for 'choosing' to participate in environments outside of the mainstream football settings. Thus, as exclusion becomes 'naturalised' and excluded groups play in other,

safer spaces, football continue to claim that they recruit players and coaches from the 'available' talent pool. Further, without acknowledging the racial discrimination and inequalities that result in a specific ethnic profile of this talent pool, the impacts and extent of racism are 'minimised' and its effects becomes more evident. Burdsey (2011b, 49) argues that such colour-blind rhetoric "provides a facade of action while actually doing nothing to dismantle the structural factors that restrict participation in the professional sphere".

Intersections of 'race' with gender

CRT and Black feminism are connected as they think *in* and *between* 'race', gender and other identities; the acknowledgement and understanding of the simultaneity of oppressions. Intersectionality is grounded in Black feminism and is both a product and expression of a CRT approach (Collins and Bilge 2016). Rearticulating the scholarship of Black feminists, including Collins, Davies, and Lorde, Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to emphasise the intersections and salience of 'race' and gender with related identities and forms of oppression, masked by structural and institutional power. Crenshaw (1989) critiqued feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourses for ignoring the simultaneous intersections of multiple social relations through the use of single axis frameworks that treat 'race' and gender as mutually exclusive categories of analysis and experience. These single axis frameworks have distorted the multidimensionality of Black women's experiences and consequently erase Black women from theory, policy and practice (Crenshaw 1989; Mirza 1997).

Black feminists have challenged dominant racial and feminist discourses for disregarding the axes of White privilege and gender privilege, ignoring difference and diversity, thus universalising the Black experience and women's experience (Brah 1996; Collins 1986, 2000; hooks 2000b; Mirza 1997, 2009; Ratna and Samie 2018). As such, there has been deliberation over the conceptualisation and utility of the terms 'equality' and 'diversity' within Black feminist discourses due to the marginalisation of 'race' and class oppressions (hooks 2000a; Ahmed 2009). Further, the concern with positioning gender equity as a women's issue has ignored the inequalities that many men experience within sport organisations, in particular men who are visible minorities in terms of 'race'.

Whiteness

Whiteness is a configuration of power and privilege; a dynamic and contested process that invariably privileges White people, whose racial identities themselves are socially constructed and lived (Frankenberg 1993). Frankenberg (1993) describes whiteness as a location of structural advantage; a 'race' privileged position that affords those labelled as White with invisible privileges that are not given to racialised 'others'. Whiteness and white privilege in sport, however, are clear and visible to those who are not included…those who live the daily effects of whiteness (Ahmed 2004). There is a growing body of scholarship examining whiteness in sport (see for example Watson and Scraton 2018; Fletcher and Hylton 2017; Hylton and Lawrence 2016; Long, Hylton and Spracklen 2014). Hylton and Fletcher (2017, 94) have argued that "there has been a noticeable development in the application of CRT to sport, physical education and leisure – in particular the study of whiteness and white privilege". In sociological scholarship and society more broadly, many of the ideas of CRT are having impact, particularly across social media, for instance decolonising campaigns in education and the wave of player activism in US sport underpinned by Black Lives Matter. Despite this, Hylton (2018) reaffirms that where 'race' and racism have been debated in the sport literature, whiteness and the power privileged by it remain on the margins of mainstream sociology of sport discourses.

Despite the dominance of whiteness in sport coaching organisations, previous research into 'race' and sport coaching has largely left whiteness in sport coaching relatively unaffected and unremarked. These processes remain invisible, unmarked, and White as an ethnicity or identity, has retained a status of 'race-lessness' (Ahmed 2004; Frankenberg 1993; Watson and Scraton 2018). Researchers have been encouraged to acknowledge and address whiteness as a process and site of power relations within research (McDonald 2005; Rollock 2013; Watson and Scraton 2018; Hylton 2018). Rollock (2013, 494) writes that it is the responsibility for *all* researchers to name, foreground and address aspects of "racial identity, race politics and positioning". In particular, she stresses the responsibility for White researchers engaging in 'race' research to critically reflect upon and disseminate awareness of these issues.

Methodology

The purpose of the current study was to examine approaches to 'race' and gender equality in sport coaching organisations in the UK using a qualitative methodology. The epistemological, ontological, and methodological ideas underpinning the qualitative mode of inquiry were embedded in the CRT approach and Black feminism scholarship framing the research. This framework begins from the ontological starting point that an understanding of lived oppression drives researchers to theorise and challenge the dominance of certain epistemologies (See Tyson 2003). Therefore, researchers working within a critical paradigm assume a historical realism ontology in that reality is shaped by "interactions of privilege and oppression" (Lincoln *et al.* 2011, 102; Parker and Lynn 2002). This standpoint and its 'race'-based and feminist methodologies offer an epistemological shift in how knowledge becomes known, believed and used (Pillow 2003). The methodology aims to expose and challenge hegemonic normative frameworks of research that are colour-gender-blind, as well as giving "voice to differing discourses that seek social change" (Pillow 2003, 187). This perspective enables a clearer understanding of the hegemonic structural and cultural practices involved in the organisation of sport coaching, which produce and maintain racialised and gendered inequalities.

The findings are drawn from a wider study in which semi-structured interviews, secondary documentary analysis of equality policies, and monitoring data of the coach workforce were triangulated. Data informing this paper was drawn from interviews carried out with 17 staff members working in either an Equality Lead role, a Coach Development role, or an Equality Consultation role from three sport organisations, two sport equality organisations, and six NGBs. The sport organisations were selected based on their authority and influence as key stakeholders with budgetary and political influence on sport policy and practice in NGBs. Two equality organisations were included whose primary roles were to promote 'race' and gender equality in sport, respectively, and to advise sports to be inclusive of under-represented groups. The six NGBs included a mixture of team and individual sports, sports associated predominantly with men, sports associated predominantly with women, and mixed-gender sports. All six NGBs were working towards varying levels of *The Equality Standard* and had an informed view on how equality and diversity policies should be implemented. Ten of the staff members identified as women (six out of 11 Equality Leads and four out of six Coaching Leads) and seven identified as men. All of the staff members identified as White, except one Equality Lead from a sport equality organisation who

identified as a male British Indian. Each organisation and NGB were assigned a pseudonym and participants were assigned the respective pseudonyms of 'Equality Lead' or 'Coaching Lead'. The organisations and participants have remained anonymous to ensure that the analysis and interpretation focuses on the key messages across the sport coaching landscape, rather than on specific sports or individuals. Anonymity was also necessary for the participants to create freedom for honesty and openness about their institutional approaches to, and their personal experiences of, 'race' and gender equality and diversity work.

The interviews provided insight into the organisation and implementation of equality and diversity policies and practice with a specific focus on 'race' and gender. Prior to each interview, participants were briefed about the research and themes for discussion. Interviews were carried out face-to-face at the participants' place of work with the exception of one telephone interview. Themes addressed in the Equality Lead interviews included: 1) participant background information, 2) equality and diversity policy approach, and 3) putting policies into practice. The themes addressed by the Coach Development Leads also included: 4) monitoring coaches and 5) equality in practice. The interviews lasted between 23 minutes to 144 minutes, were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim following each participant's consent. The method of thematic analysis was used to aid the identification, analysis and reporting of themes across the data set (Braun and Clarke 2006). Text from the interview transcripts were selected and filed under themes and sub-themes using NVivo 10. Themes were refined and re-named as the analysis process progressed, initially by Author A and then shared and triangulated with the authorship team.

The positionality of researchers carrying out critical work on 'race' and gender should never be ignored in social research (Rollock 2013). Social identities and their lived experiences have a direct effect on researchers, how they see and interpret the world, what research they regard as important and how they do it. As a team, our use of CRT and Black feminism is reflective of ontological positions borne of living 'race' and gender. As two White British women (Authors A and C), and a Black British male of African Caribbean descent (Author B), 'race' and gender, interconnected with multiple other social identities, impacts on each of us in different ways as researchers and academics in the social sciences. Therefore, how we interpret our individual and collective approach to, and reading of, the discursive terrain of the sport coaching landscape has remained central due to our reflexivity on the multiple situated identities we occupy. In particular, we are mindful of our combined

positions of privilege and the responsibility to provide a platform to challenge rather than perpetuate power structures. This relates to the critical social research process and recognition of scholarly literature, and the consequent effect of our scholarship on the field of sport sociology, coaching and equity.

Findings

The findings are discussed under three interrelated themes illustrating the conceptual blind spots in relation to organisational approaches to 'race' *and* gender equality in sport coaching: i) The marginality of 'race' in the equalities agenda ii) Patterns of (in)visibility and iii) Whitening Equality.

The marginality of 'race' in the equalities agenda

In the UK, there is recognition of the salience of 'race' as a meaningful socio-political category (Hylton and Long 2015). Despite this, a prominent finding from the interviews was that 'race' and ethnicity concerns were marginal within equalities agendas for sport organisations, as well as in sport coaching policy and practice. The Equality Lead from a national Equality organisation explained that 'race' and racial equality were often side-lined within NGB business plans:

> *There is a louder political voice around disability and gender in comparison [to 'race' and ethnicity] because you have a pathway for disability sport … and you've got a women's arm of governing bodies so you've got separate structures. (Equality Lead, Equality Organisation 1).*

The turn to ideas of a hierarchy of oppressions is instructive in relation to the liminal space that 'race' and ethnicity occupy in sport coaching policy and implementation. This point was reiterated by the Equality Lead at a Sport Organisation whose testimony illustrated the relegation of 'race' equality to the promotion of a dominant high performance discourse in UK sport:

> *Because our focus is performance, I think one of the dangers or one of the pitfalls we have in terms of equality is that we think of it in terms of disability,*

because we've got Olympics and Paralympics, and also in terms of gender because again it's easy, you know, you have separate events for women [and men] so I think the natural position is to think of equality in those two areas. (Equality Lead, Sport Organisation 1).

The Coaching Lead for NGB2, one of the larger NGBs with the preliminary level of *The Equality Standard*, explained that whilst disability and gender (which referred to only women), were "*high up on the agenda*", everything else, including considerations of 'race' and the racial dynamics affecting access to high performance coach education, were relegated to "*sit beneath it*". The Coaching Lead at Sport Organisation 2 emphasised this point when stating: "*I think even the NGBs that are concentrating on disability and women don't think about ethnicity at all*". Thus 'race' equality was effectively at the bottom of a hierarchy of disadvantage and any direct and meaningful discussion and action around 'race' and racial equality was absent (Burke 2012, Carrington and McDonald 2003).

The organisational discourses that set the terms for 'race' and gender equality can ignore discussions of 'race', possibly for fear of finding evidence of negative racial processes that require attention. This was evidenced during the interviews in which a number of participants omitted to mention 'race' and ethnicity when discussing the equality characteristics and under-represented groups within their organisation. Some also expressed a degree of anxiety when discussing 'race' and ethnicity issues redolent of actors unfamiliar with such conversations. The following quotes exemplify this:

I just can't think how to say this <u>and</u> be politically correct [Emphasis added] *(Coaching Lead, NGB2).*

That's completely uncontroversial so I feel OK saying that (Equality Lead, NGB5).

I don't want to use the wrong terminology, it's not an area that I'm … I wouldn't really be able to comment (Coaching Lead, NGB3).

In contrast to these blunt, unfinished sentences, participants talked openly about gender and disability when asked about the organisational profile of staff, athletes and coaches. Bonilla-Silva (2002, 62) argues that conversations that result in an increased degree of anxiety and rhetorical incoherence in discussions of 'race' and race equality is common in institutions where they are marginal or ignored. Similar arguments have been rehearsed in an education context in which "race and racism become a 'no-go' area, leaving fundamental issues around the recruitment, progression and experiences of Black and minority ethnic staff unaddressed" (Rollock 2013, 493; Ahmed 2009). This appears to be the case here where the lack of engagement with 'race' at a policy or strategy level has led to a reluctance and lack of knowledge about how to articulate such issues at an individual level.

Patterns of (in)visibility: the intersections of 'race' and gender

Baseline data that provide an accurate representation of coaches is important in order to highlight, and benchmark issues in service provision. When asked about the number of coaches from different social groups, the participants were unable to provide accurate information due to a lack of rigour or absence of ethnic monitoring. The Equality Lead at a NGB that managed a mixed-gender sport exemplified this when responding to a question about the numbers of women coaches from different ethnic groups: "*It [monitoring data] would just come through as gender and then 'race'" (Equality Lead, NGB5).* An Equality Lead, who acted in a consultancy role to advise NGBs on equality and diversity issues related to gender, reinforced the limitations of statistical data sets and the inability to provide cross-sectional statistics of sport coaches.

> *We could tell you a gender break[down], we could tell you a BME* [sic] *break[down] but whether we could give you a gender / BME break[down] in terms of the numbers of BME women…I'm not sure (Equality Lead, Equality Organisation 2).*

As a result, there was no gender breakdown of the White coaches for example, or ethnic breakdown of the women coaches. Thus, 'race' and gender, in the context of sport coaching, were addressed as separate stand-alone categories (Rankin-Wright and Norman 2018). Roberts (2013, 1) has discussed the "limitations of bounded categories" in relation to lived

experiences and research, and stated: “such categories locate particular constituencies in what Wright (2004) refers to as a space of contradiction. In such spaces one can be visible and invisible, erased and present”. These single category approaches should continue to be criticised for failing to account for intersecting forms of advantage, disadvantage and lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

The Equality Lead in this consultancy role further alluded to a reductionist approach when discussing women’s engagement in sport as participants as well as coaches. She stated:

> *We’ve tried to move ourselves a little bit away from the ‘quoting diversity’ box insofar as if you look at women they are not hard to reach, they are over half of the population, we are everywhere, actually women’s participation in sport shouldn’t necessarily be an equality issue in the traditional sense and women shouldn’t necessarily be treated as a hard to reach group (Equality Lead, Equality Organisation 2).*

This focus on patriarchy as the primary structure of women’s oppression in sport coaching illustrates Black women’s liminality and *double-burden* of gender and ‘race’ (Jean and Feagin 1998). This was criticised by the Equality Lead at Sport Organisation 2, who argued that homogenising women failed to account for the ways in which ‘race’, and gender as well as other social relations, differentiated the experience and situation of sport coaches (Holvino 2010). She explained:

> *I think that’s a massive issue because if you give information to a governing body about coaching women, female participants in sport, they could read that information and go “Right, this is what we need to do, we need to do point one, we need to…”… and they have to recognise that there are differences … we are all individuals. (Equality Lead, Sport Organisation 2).*

This Equality Lead recognised that the intersections of these multiple and dynamic relations are simultaneously lived by coaches and participants; they are part of the social structure within their sporting contexts, and impact how they are treated with regards to recruitment, retention and progression. This is particularly the case for Black women coaches who negotiate intersectional gendered and racialised structural and relational oppressions (Borland

and Bruening 2010; Carter-Francique and Olushola 2016; Rankin-Wright and Norman 2018). The general failure in these national sport organisations and NGBs to develop an integrated analysis and practice that accounts for coaches having complex but under-theorised identities reinforces an essentialist view based on the privileging of single dimensions of womanhood (Brah and Phoenix 2004). A 'blind spot' in these equality agendas and monitoring procedures occurs due to the inability of policy makers to see women as anything but White. The representation of Black women within sport coaching is thus characterised by what Mirza (2009, 78) describes as "patterns of invisibility", in which they are imperceptible in separate monitoring and legislative provision and practice for 'race' and sex.

Whitening Equality

In a racially structured arena, such as sport coaching, whiteness is often left unremarked for those racially privileged. The participants all identified as White, with the exception of the Equality Lead for Equality Organisation 2 who self-reported his ethnicity as British Indian. This sample in itself is indicative of the lack of racial diversity in the governance of sport. The racial hierarchies and White privilege within sport coaching was largely unnoticed by participants. The following testimony exemplifies this, in which one Equality Lead illustrated the positive gender mix in her NGB by reviewing the number of (White) women in senior positions:

> *In terms of gender we're doing reasonably well. We've got a non-exec Director who's a woman, … and at the highest level we've got [a woman] who is head of finances, director of finances and she's also the secretary so she's got a very high role. … The head of the legal department is a woman, the head of operations is a woman … [Question from Author A regarding ethnicity] … They are all White women. That's what I meant, in terms of gender we are doing ok, but in terms of BME [sic] at the higher level we are not, not at all. (Equality Lead, NGB1).*

The Coaching Lead for Sport Organisation 2 made similar claims about the positive gender mix within her organisation whilst marginalising racial inequalities between and within groups of men and women:

> *We have a very good mix of men and women in the organisation, whereas I think a lot of governing bodies tend to be quite male heavy. Our Chief Operating Officer is a woman, Chief Operating Officer for our partner organisation, is a woman, the Chief Exec's a man but other than that in terms of the heads, well it's one woman to three men, but within the organisation itself we are a 50/50 split, which is great. … [Question from Author A regarding ethnicity] … The BME* [sic] *representation is not good. (Coaching Lead, Sport Organisation 2).*

The accounts from these (White) women, interacting with a White woman researcher, highlight the centrality of whiteness in informing our understanding of equality in sport coaching. Their accounts further illustrate the limited insight into racialised processes within sport coaching of those who arguably occupy central/privileged rather than liminal spaces (hooks 2000b; Ladson-Billings and Donnor 2008; Rollock 2012, 2013). As White women, they have a degree of freedom to enter and progress within sport coaching on the grounds of their whiteness. They share a social history and habitus with White men, which may aid them in becoming insiders (Ratna 2018). 'Race' is recognised as a barrier for racialised others, but their own raced White identity when rendered visible is not viewed as a privilege for themselves. The focus on White women in senior positions, who are racially privileged serves to sustain the social power and status within this sport coaching organisation and marginalise those who are multiply-burdened (Crenshaw 1989).

Conclusion

This paper has described 'blind spots' with regards to approaches to 'race' and gender equality in sport coaching organisations in the UK. These included: The marginality of 'race' in the equalities agenda; Patterns of (in)visibility; and Whitening Equality. The implications for policy makers and practitioners emerge in the use of the intersectional framework underpinned by CRT and Black feminism that helps to forefront 'race' and racism at the intersections with gender - issues that have not been a prominent part of discussions in practice. Multi issue/axis as well as single issue/axis discourses need to be engaged in sport coaching research, policy and practice to disrupt the specific complexities that make up subordinating and exclusionary processes (Collins 2000). It is incumbent on key stakeholders such as UK Coaching, Sports Councils, NGBs and their related equality partners to operate

with deeper critical insight and awareness of how they can better deploy 'race', gender and their intersections to include and empower. This framework challenges obfuscatory notions of meritocracy and centres whiteness, 'race' and gender using the narrative of conceptual blind spots. For instance, the findings evidence that current approaches in sport coaching equality agendas that consider a gender category *or* a 'race' category privilege certain voices over others. Policy makers and practitioners must challenge these single-issue approaches and work towards equality agendas that consider gender *and* 'race' as complex and connected.

The findings also demonstrate that 'race' and race equality occupy minor positions on sporting equality agendas. The study highlights the ineffectual impact of legislation and initiatives that rely on providing more opportunities based on a single social axis. Racial processes are inherently intertwined with gender and the salience of each shifting in different sport contexts. Equality policies and practices that fail to fully articulate and address the nature of discrimination through either marginalising issues or focusing on one categorical oppression at the exclusion of others further create blind spots in the sport coaching equality agenda (Crenshaw 1991). The findings indicate that equality initiatives in sport coaching that are governed from positions of privilege too often neglect the complexity of oppressions. In particular, the significance of whiteness as gendered is often neglected (Scraton 2001). The White practitioners interviewed for this research and Author A who carried out the interviews, as a White researcher, sit within this wider system of 'race' inequality that Rollock (2013, 500) explains is "characterised by performances of privilege, power and entitlement". It is these racially privileged voices that continue to dominate gender equality discourse in sport coaching, both within organisations and research. This is of concern if these voices fail to account for and evidence racial inequalities in policy implementation and equality initiatives. The contributions of Black feminist thought and intersectionality are invaluable for understanding the multiplicity of inequality and oppressions facing sport coaches, and particularly Black women coaches.

There is a desperate need for a concerted 'race' conscious intersectional analysis in sport coaching to further examine the complexities of inclusion and exclusion for coaches and the different levels in which social divisions are constructed and interconnected. The colour-blindness within organisations that suggest all coaches are equal are likely to heighten patterns of discrimination that are (re)produced between and within different groups of coaches. We need to understand sport coaching from the social locations of Black and Asian

minoritised ethnic men and women coaches, those who are often on the margins of decision-making regarding policy and practice. An approach that engages a politics of intersectionality encourages different ways of thinking and theorising, and provides a greater understanding of the multiplicity, complexities and dynamic nature of power relations and oppressions (Brah and Phoenix 2004). An intersectional approach to 'race' and gender equality work, that includes the continuous questioning of whiteness, is also advocated for sport and coaching policy makers, practitioners, and researchers (Massao and Fasting 2014). Ultimately, 'race' and gender, as well as social class, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religion (common demographic information required on monitoring forms), must be understood as interlocking systems of domination and power (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989). 'Race' and its intersections matter; 'race' is significant in society, and cannot be a 'blind spot' anymore in sport policy and practice.

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745

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751

[i] We have used the 'BAME' here, as this term was used in the research report referenced. 'BAME', often used interchangeably with 'BME'(Black and Minoritised Ethnic) in UK policy documents, is a popular acronym used in policy circles in the UK, used to denote the diverse positions and identities of all those individuals classed as 'in the minority'. BAME makes South Asian identities more explicit.

[ii] Title IX is a federal civil rights law in the United States of America that was passed as part of the Education Amendments of 1972.

[iii] Sport England, Sport Scotland, the Sports Council for Wales, and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland

[iv] UK Coaching, formally Sports Coach UK, are the national agency for coaching, working principally with national governing bodies in the recruitment and development of sports coaches.

[v] Whilst acknowledging that ‘black’ remained a contested concept for recognising personal identity, and the multiplicity of experiences within and across different groups of people, Mirza used the term to denote a collective identity and space.